APH Libraries

Pamphlet File
Professional Library
NERC/APH

WHAT'S NEW IN CURRICULUM PLANNING

Proceedings of a Teacher Workshop

12th Annual Convention

of the

National Association for Retarded Children

Chicago, Illinois — October 20, 1962

National Association for Retarded Children
420 LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017

PROFESSIONAL LIBR...
AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIN
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

4P
4/18/92

M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

"WHAT'S NEW IN CURRICULUM PLANNING"

Proceedings of a Teacher Workshop

12th Annual Convention
of the
National Association for Retarded Children

Chairman: James T. Baldini, Ph.D.

Participants:

Bluma B. Weiner, Ed.D.
Department of Special Education
and Rehabilitation
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Catharine L. Hultsch, Principal
Opportunity School for Trainable
Mentally Retarded
Wilmington, Delaware

Sister Mary Theodore
St. Coletta School
Jefferson, Wisconsin

Bernice B. Baumgartner
Director of Special Education
The Woods Schools and Residential
Treatment Center
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

Edward L. LaCrosse
Education Consultant
National Association for Retarded
Children
New York, New York

INTRODUCTION

James T. Baldini, Ph.D.
Moderator

In simple words, curriculum planning, to me, means what the teacher does in the classroom to prepare the student for the challenges that he will meet in life. In essence it is the heart of all formal educational programs. Unfortunately, in the case of the mentally retarded too often we have had to concern ourselves too much with getting them into school and perhaps as a consequence have not concerned ourselves with what to do with them after they get into school.

The participants in this workshop were selected because of their considerable experience in the field of education for the mentally retarded and because of the excellence of the programs for which they have been responsible. The quality of their papers presented here is evidence enough of their capabilities.

In listening to their presentations it struck me that the one message that each of them had, although each expressed it differently, was:

> "Fit the curriculum to each child's needs. Don't try to fit the child to the curriculum."

The specifics used in getting this message across should be of value to all teachers and as such are here being made available by NARC.

DESIRED PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR THE RETARDED

by

Bluma B. Weiner

The title of this panel -- What's New In Curriculum Planning -- is ambitious and challenging. It is also somewhat disconcerting to me, as your first speaker, whose task it is to address the problems of principles and objectives, since these are rather enduring commodities which do not change with the seasons. I am assuming, then, that the words "What's new?" are more in the nature of a greeting than a question, and that what we are really after is a clearer and more precise statement for the purpose of providing guidance and leadership to public and independent school programs -- or even to our programs of home training.

With this thought in mind, then, I believe that the most promising influence on the formulation of principles and objectives for our educational programs is the heightened awareness of the growth process itself. This renewed awareness seems to be manifested in a greater interest in the possibilities of systematic environmental opportunity and stimulation. Its meaning and implications for curriculum building are clear: the major objectives of the curriculum must be the promotion of growth -- of movement toward ends which are (1) consistent with the nature of the human organism, and (2) consistent with the form of social organization in which he must survive. Specifically, then, the real objectives of curriculum may be expressed in the realization of two interdependent purposes: the humanization of the child (retarded or otherwise) and his socialization or "acculturation".

The retarded child, like other children, has to develop his own individual ways (or responses) and, at the same time, acquire skills in and respect for the ways of his particular society. This is a lifelong task for all human creatures. A well-known book on the treatment of emotionally disturbed children admonishes us that "Love Is Not Enough". The author, Dr. Bruno Bettleheim, points out that there must also be clear understanding of the child's particular problems and needs, and a carefully regulated plan of procedures for meeting them. We who work with retarded children can learn an important lesson from this insight shown us by our colleagues in psychotherapeutic practice. Neither love alone nor good intentions -- all by themselves -- are enough for the job at hand.

The all-important question that we have to answer is what kind

of guidance -- or principles of operation -- have been discovered which will help us to achieve the twin purposes of humanization and acculturation? The first and most important principle to bear in mind is that children grow toward these objectives; they do not go directly in a quick, straight line, but rather move toward them as a result of a multitude of experiences. A very simple, but none the less valid formulation of principles is suggested by the system of observations which Dr. Arnold Gesell devised for the observation and evaluation of developmental behavior. Gesell pointed out that, in general, behavior can be classified into four broad categories: motor, adaptive, language and social. These forms of behavior are inherent in the biological potential of the human being, and fostering experience and learning in each of these areas actually provides the building blocks for the kind of curriculum we desire.

For example, motor behavior means movement, not only locomotion, but all kinds of bodily articulation. The retarded child (like other children) needs many kinds of physical activities for the improvement of balance, posture, and coordination. The values of such activities are familiar to physical education teachers and physical therapists. They need to be more widely appreciated among all special educators and among the general profession as well.

Adaptive behavior is essentially manipulation of the environment. Gesell called it "movement plus judgment". The retarded child, no less than other children, should have many opportunities to explore the use of a variety of materials, utensils, and tools in order to acquire increasingly effective comprehension and control of ordinary events in daily life.

Language behavior is concerned with the reception and expression of meaning, primarily through verbal communications. The retarded child must be helped to learn the names of the objects, activities, and processes which he encounters in his daily activities. It has sometimes been said that we learn to think by talking. Language is certainly undeniably a most critical social function; the capacity of the retarded child for intelligible communication -- whether by gestures, facial expressions, or words -- should be skillfully nurtured. Through such ways the child learns to understand the feelings and wants of others and to show some of his own desires. Language, then, is a prime factor in socialization and acculturation.

So-called social behavior, i.e. interaction with other persons, depends upon both maturation and on motivation. Acceptable social behavior is the result of developmental readiness and opportunity; it is also linked with the degree of satisfaction which the child obtains from an activity, either intrinsically or because of the

expressions of approval which he recognizes in those around him.

As we said earlier, these four areas of behavior are closely interrelated, and gains or deficiencies in one aspect can affect development in the companion areas. By observing these principles of growth we can devise a true compass for curriculum development.

This knowledge, itself, is not new. What is new, or at least what is now more clearly understood than ever before by larger numbers of persons responsible for teaching retarded children, is the significance of systematic provisions for stimulation and instruction in each of the areas at levels of difficulty which increase as the child matures. This is no less true for the retarded child than for the child who is not retarded. Recent summaries of research into the achievements of children who have been enrolled in programs for the mentally retarded indicate sizeable gaps between what these children have learned and what they should have been expected to learn, in terms of their mental maturity. Other investigations, such as those currently under way by Kirk and his associates, indicate some of the possible solutions to special learning problems. All of these findings have influence on current thinking about the objectives of the school curriculum, although admittedly it takes time for thinking to filter into all communities and to be implemented into common practice. However, in this respect education is not different from other community efforts; for example, we have known for years a great many important facts about housing in relation to health, but the evidence of our indifference and neglect is all around us.

However, this afternoon it will be our privilege to share in the thinking and observations of persons who have made a life career of their interest in retarded children. Various aspects of curriculum will be discussed. If we listen carefully, we will see that all of them can be classified according to one or more of the phases of development which have been outlined here. We will see, also, that the total of their effects will lead in the direction of assisting the retarded child to realize his potential humanity and to participate as best he can in a free democratic society.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL

by

Catharine L. Hultsch

Opportunity School is a school for trainable mentally retarded children ages 6 to 21 years, I.Q.'s 30 to 50. In September 1957 the Wilmington Public Schools took over a former parent school, children, equipment and an untrained staff. During the first two years curriculum guides prepared by other communities were used, but we were handicapped by an untrained staff. The third year opened with a trained professional staff. This group started to develop sequential experiences in self help, social and emotional development, usefulness, language development, physical education, art and music. It was an exciting experience in which we really saw child development in slow motion.

During our fourth year the Delaware Foundation for Retarded Children gave about $14,000 from the All Star Football Game to the Wilmington Public Schools for development of curriculum guides for educable and trainable children. This was to be used for consultant service, experimental materials, payment of teachers to work during the summer and printing of the guides. The teachers of educable children worked with the supervisor of special education on their guides and the teachers of trainable children worked with me.

About this time the elementary schools were working on a curriculum for helping children meet human relations needs. The teachers of trainable children read some of their bulletins and felt that a curriculum which emphasized human relations concepts, skills, sensitivities and understandings would provide for our children a background to select behavior appropriate to the situation.

Identifying the needs of the children was our first step. Since intellectual level, influenced by successes, failures, and past experiences, the physical development, the social and emotional development, and the cultural development, influenced by attitudes, values, and ideals, all determine the child's level of performance, it was necessary to study our children carefully.

In addition to studying the children's cumulative folders, making home visits and having parent conferences we developed

and used the following diagnostic tools:

Listening to the children's spontaneous conversation.

One child asked "Why are there ghosts in the walls?
My mother says they are there."

Is this a cultural superstitution or is it a means of discipline?

Another time at recess time in the classroom on a rainy day, a teacher heard, "Come right in Mrs. C., and take a chair. I'll be right with you soon as I stir the greens. I've got white potatoes, you bring some sweets and some bread. Won't take me but a minute to fry up some chicken. You just set there in the chair and take your ease."

This probably depicts social life in the home and sharing.

Engaging the children in structured conversation.

From a discussion on taking a bath, one child said, "You'll catch a cold if you take a bath every day".

Is this the result of substandard sanitary conditions at the home, folk lore or home values?

Asking open ended questions.

"What do you do when it thunders and lightening flashes?"

"Stay in

Go to bed

Put windows down

Lock back door so place won't get flooded

When storm no television

Sit in mommy's lap

Pretty - noise"

"With whom do you play, what, where?"

"What is the best thing that happened to your family?'

Observing the children's reaction to routine or extraordinary problems of daily living such as sudden illness, unacceptable behavior.

Group planning, problem solving and teacher pupil evaluation of activities.

Making field trips, parties, luncheons.

Making modified time budgets and diaries with older children.

These diagnostic procedures involved the teacher in listing and watching in order to get important data about children's life experiences, feelings, and in-school and out-of school behavior. We know that experimenting often preceeds learning.

The teachers also considered for diagnostic purposes familiar routines or concrete devices through which it is possible to look at the social world through children's eyes and assess their needs.

These diagnostic tools included:

Conversation with puppets or family figures

Dramatic play

Block building

Homemaking situations, setting table, washing dishes, making beds, cleaning

Shop work - care and handling of tools, attitude toward tools

Creative arts - paper and pencil or crayons, paints, clay

All these served as instruments to secure children's perception of themselves and the world about them.

Our second step after we had identified the children's needs was the development of units of work oriented toward meeting human relations needs for each age group.

In evaluating the success of our efforts we found that:

1. Our children had developed insights, sensitivities, understanding and concepts, which they had not previously had.

2. There was unbelievable growth in academic skills and knowledge and its use. Some of the children had acquired a sight reading vocabulary of over a hundred words, some were seeing similarities and differences in words and analyzing new words. Children learned to count, tell time and some recognized money and could make simple change. Many children could read and follow very simple directions and receipts.

3. There was growth in the command of skills in living and working with people. When we took the children to cummunity concerts, to a matinee at the local playhouse, on trips and train rides and walks, people commented on the excellent behavior and manners of the children.

4. The children were cleaner and more neatly dressed than formerly.

5. Safety precautions were observed.

6. There was increased knowledge and acceptance of self and others. We had few behavior problems. Children were able to recognize when they felt frustrated and to control their behavior. They were accepting and tolerant of others.

When our guide is completed it will contain sequential skills, methods and materials in addition to some of the experience units developed. The staff has learned much from the experience. The children have shown remarkable growth. We are convinced that no one knows how far we can go with these children. We have now only make a beginning in curriculum development for trainable children.

TEACHING AND RESOURCE MATERIALS NECESSARY FOR A GOOD SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR THE RETARDED

by

Sister Mary Theodore

To organize sequentially the best teaching and resource materials for children with mental retardation is an objective of the St. Coletta Schools Curriculum Series. Some of these materials have been contributed by teachers at the five St. Coletta Schools; others are references listed with proper sources for obtaining materials desired. The curriculum series is published by the Special Education Department of The Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Six subjects are currently available: Arithmetic, Art Education, Crafts, Music, Reading and Religion for the Mentally Handicapped. Physical Education is in process of publication and should be ready in November, 1962. Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, Craft Education, Speech Improvement, Occupational Education for Young Retarded Adults, and a Practical Skills Curriculum for the Trainable Mentally Handicapped are in preparation.

From an administrative point of view, the early groundwork for this curriculum series was laid by providing special training for the teachers. Generous opportunities to participate in conventions and institutes made it possible to meet leaders in the field and to get acquainted with new ideas. Another step was the opening, in 1943, of a summer training program for teachers, and it is when instructing teachers of the retarded that a staff becomes particularly alert to methods and materials adaptable to Special Education. The summer workshop has developed into part of a Graduate Program leading to the Master's degree for Teachers of the Mentally Handicapped, offered at The Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee.

Curriculum Workshops

Another factor favorable to curriculum development was the setting up of branch St. Coletta Schools from the original 1904 foundation at Jefferson, Wisconsin, thus providing a stimulating situation from which personnel can gather for annual workshops in curriculum construction to provide leadership for the weekly sessions held at the individual schools. Guided by experience in working with retarded children, the teachers determine upon the goals they hope to attain and select materials accordingly. They have recognized the growing need for a curriculum adapted to our teaching

situation; a basic guide for all teachers who experience a similar need.

When organized construction of curriculum begins, there is an immediate emphasis on self evaluation. What are we actually doing? How well are we doing it? How can we improve our program and share with others?

Texts and materials come under scrutiny and new aids are sought. Reviewing the teaching from lowest to highest levels clarifies direction and goals so that materials can be adapted accordingly. A curriculum should be developmental with maximum individual growth as a target. A curriculum should be sequential, following definite patterns of progress in learning. A curriculum should be spiral, providing much repetition with specific, concrete experiences. For these experiences the materials should be the "real thing", as genuine money and actual earnings and purchases, small at first, when learning to understand money value and to make change. Finally, a curriculum should be experiential; problem solving ought to stem from life situations.

In developing the St. Coletta Schools Curriculum, administrators, supervisors and teachers collaborated in setting up planning sessions for staff members from the three residential and two day schools. A group experimented with format until they had an idea that was distinctive and practical, with clarity of outline, space for teacher's notes, suggested references and ease in locating material. In visualizing the content to be included in the curriculum, the teachers considered how their needs night parallel the needs of other teachers. Separate monographs were decided upon so that detailed helps for the teacher could be included without having a bulky volume. The monograph form allows for growth and enrichment as new editions can be readily provided and current materials included.

Attention to Individual Needs

Care is needed to avoid becoming so engrossed in curriculum that the individual child is overlooked. No matter how excellent the guide may be, a teacher will always need to make adaptations of content and materials according to individual needs of children with mental retardation. The teacher is guided by an accepted curriculum regarding "what to teach"; suggestions of "how to teach" should be flexible.

Material is presented according to developmental levels, from Kindergarten to Advanced, with color cues for convenience in locating each level. Subject matter is geared to provide for the adult needs of mentally retarded individuals with mental ages

from 3 to 12 years. Texts and related materials are selected on the basis of analysis of content: progression of skills, provision for repetition, type of illustrations used, physical make-up in relation to learning problems of retarded children. An effort was made to avoid texts, such as commonly used readers, with which the children had already experienced failure before placement in a special school. The co-basal or tri-basal series selected are on the children's learning level, but are intended to be new to them and therefore to provide greater interest and motivation.

Individual teacher-made materials are expecially helpful for children with mental retardation because they are geared to meet specific needs. Three dimensional charts and illustrative materials are effective in arousing interest and conveying concepts. Teaching machines and programmed learning seem to hold much promise for the retarded, although care must be taken to provide sufficient social development. Equipment which can utilize teacher-prepared materials adds less expense to the initial cost and may be better adapted to individual needs, but they are more consuming of teacher time and energy.

Taped lessons, in which a teacher records on tape a lesson exactly as she would teach it, are a workable means of providing small group instruction for some children while the teacher is busy with another class group. Children working at the taped lesson wear earphones for greater concentration. The lessons prepared on tape should comprise these steps; content presentation to which the pupils listen carefully; drilling and testing on the presented material; manipulative exercises, either pencil and paper or other checking devices to give the children a chance to apply the new concepts.

Craft classes can use practically any material, including scrap materials of various kinds, if it brings out creative ideas and gives the child a sense of achievement and success. All craft materials used by normal children can be used with the retarded if adapted to individual abilities.

Music pupils begin with rhythm sticks used in class groups and then instruments for rhythm band are introduced. Harmony band instruments with four notes according to number are next; then tonettes on which an octave can be played. Mastering these instruments introduces the reading of music and forms steps toward learning to play band or string instruments.

As each new or revised monograph of the St. Coletta School Curriculum Series becomes available, current teaching and resource materials necessary for a good school program for the retarded are brought to the attention of interested teachers.

THE IDEAL CURRICULUM FOR THE RETARDED

RELATED INTO TERMS OF CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Bernice B. Baumgartner

The classroom activities for the mentally retarded individual within an "ideal curriculum" are tailored to the dimensions of a particular child -- to his growth, his development, his home, and his community. The activities ref ect the background of each child s own past experiences and knowledge, the sum of all his past environment, the sensitivities and the skills of teachers in providing for the child's own continuity in living.

Martha gave her teacher clues by moving into a group as she used a single question, "What you doing?" Martha was ready for group activity. The teacher sang, "The Barber Song'. Martha hummed the song. She changed the words to dramatize activities in a beauty parlor. The teacher and class followed Martha's lead. They went "up and down" on the bus to the beauty parlor. They shampooed hair, and sat under the dryer with a "z-z-z-z." Such activities lead to other meaningful experiences for Martha, a nine-year-old, emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded child. For months Martha isolated herself from the group. A glimmer of understanding broke through as she expressed her experiences in large drawings to her psycho-therapist and to her teachers. A different child emerged in camp as Martha jumped into deep water and propelled herself with her individualized "porpoise-like' movements A number of questions to adults came next, such as, "Who are you? Why you here? Where do jets fly? Where they go?" Moving to the fringes of a group, dramatizing her own experiences, with but one question, was a new milestone in Martha's continuity of living. Out of this child's growth, her learnings, her behaviors, her particular timing come the activities that enable her to move from the known to the unknown.

In such activities, the child proceeds only from the place where he is. The child is guid d toward his best fulfillment through the understanding relationships between teacher and child, among all the persons in the school, and among parents and school personnel. Interaction within a warm emotional climate, leads to the discovery of activities conducive to sound development. Parents learn from teachers. Teachers

learn from parents and other personnel.

What fun Joey had on the day his mother arrived from Winnepeg and saw Joey elbow deep in finger paint. Mother rolled up her sleeves and finger painted with Joey. For the first time in non-verbal Joey's twelve years, he was able to communicate with Mother.

The balloons a housemother brought to a weekend activity, provided motivation for some of Tina's first verbal communication. As Tina saw the ballooms, she cried "loon, loon, loon". These clues were shared with her teacher, who in turn, provided motivation for spontaneous verbalization at lunch while Tina was relaxed.

Jane's perceptive parents are interested in learning from Jane's teacher. Jane's mother takes her home for each weekend. A large portion of such periods are spent in singing the songs and moving to the rhythms used in the classroom, while Jane's mother plays the piano. Bits and pieces of progress are shared between supervisor, teacher, and parent.

Roger, a student-assistant to a physical education teacher, is helping some young children enjoy the trampoline. His parents learn about these activities from Roger's weekly letters. The parents follow Roger's step-by-step development as teachers help him express and evaluate his own abilities in writing.

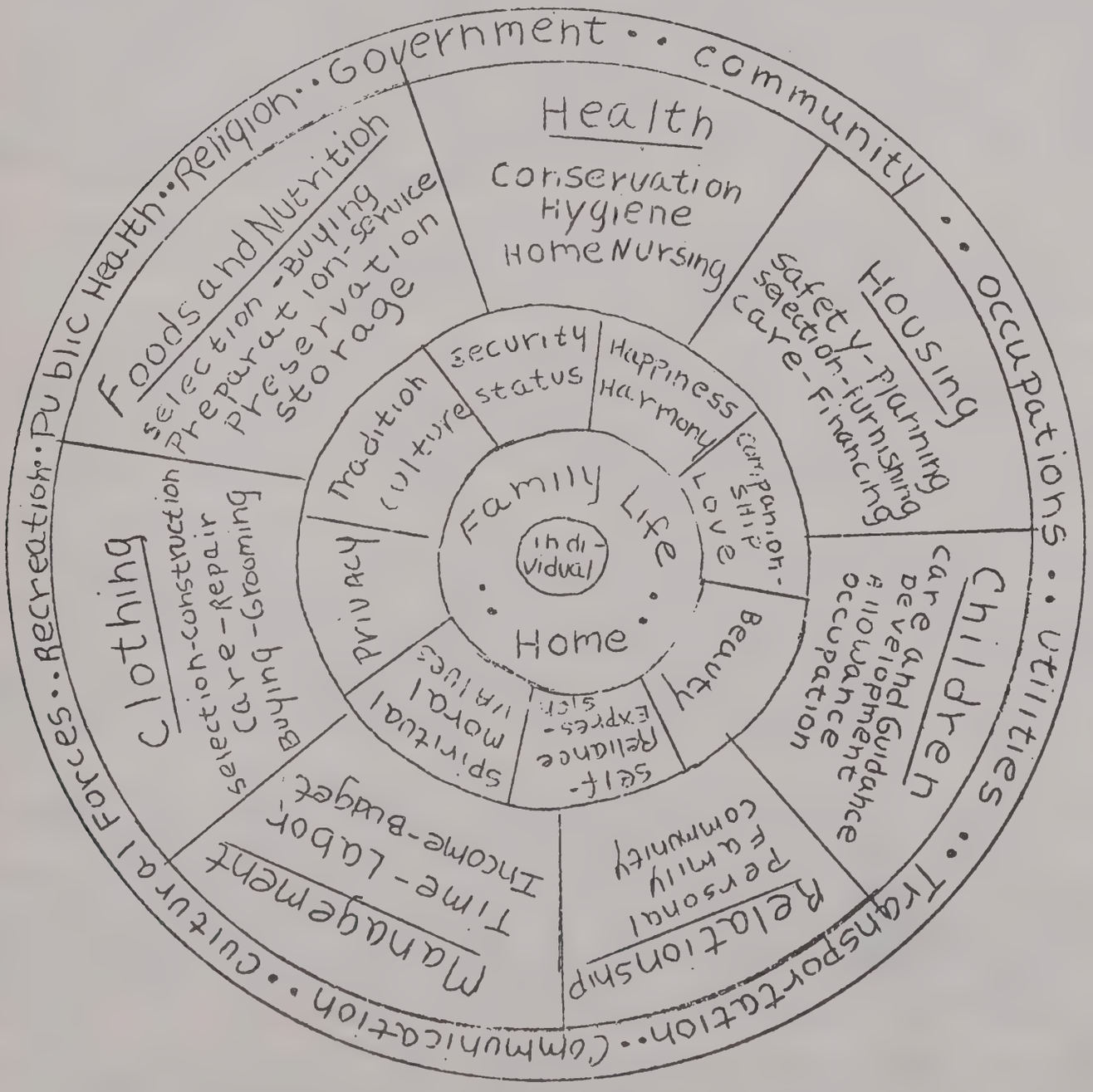
The evaluation of such activities is based upon the knowledge, the abilities and the limitations of the student. The results do not produce uniformity within any given class. Rather, they account for the diversity of activities and are as varied as the members of the group and the past experiences they have had.

The need for diversity of activities is evident at The Woods Schools in the pupils from thirty-nine different states and eleven different countries. Approaches differ as teachers explore many avenues in understanding the home environment of each individual, the community from which he comes and the program best suited to his needs. Tomas from Venezuela has a temperament and experiences far different from Alabama-reared June. He has a major interest in dinosaurs and their relation to pre-historic history because "Daddy" is a scientist.

As this retarded child grows older, he continues to seek from daily existence what all of us seek -- status and security. He needs these to attain a life of happiness and usefulness. He needs a harmonious relation to classmates at school, in the family constellation at home, and in community acquaintances as he gradually

becomes a member of a community. While he, himself may not be able to express his vital needs succinctly, his teachers (we believe and hope!) have kept such needs in mind over the years they have guided him. And we must remember those needs in planning ongoing activities.

As we examine some of the logical components, we see the activities, that grow out of home and family living, leading to an "ideal curriculum" for this individual. The team-teachers at The Woods Schools are clarifying their thinking by complementing each other's skills. The Home and Family Living Wheel (illustrated below) is found useful to these teachers as they face the problems of individualizing and integrating while finding the continuity for each individual.



HOME AND FAMILY LIVING WHEEL

Each student is considered the hub of such a wheel. Teachers view him through complete psychological, psychiatric, and other medical studies, through parent counseling reports, through daily observations, through interaction of all concerned with his welfare. Family life -- in his own particular home and in his residential home -- is an integral part of the hub. Culture, companionship, love, beauty and numerous other values are enmeshed in planning constructive experiences.

The components of experiences may include the study of clothing -- care and repair of student's own wardrobe, shopping and buying new clothes, selecting materials and constructing garments, and the complementary art of grooming. Learnings related to selecting and buying foods, preparing meals and serving them, storage and preservation of foods, with the overall emphasis on understanding human nutritional needs. Maintenance of good health and personal hygiene are vital to every activity. With ultimate expansion of such subject matter may come for instance, the realm of home nursing. Other additions to the curriculum may include the study of the home itself, its maintenance, furnishings, safety knowledge and financing. Child development, care and guidance are logically another facet of the emphasis on home and family life.

Self-reliance comes with the knowledge and practice of specifics -- as those that will be encountered in such a planned curriculum on home and family living. There must also be self-expression for the fullest development of any student's potential. It is not enough to know -- we want to tell others. As we tell them, there is further growth within us of our individual personalities. We begin to realize that we are, and those about us realize that we are. We begin to realize that we know -- we can do things. Those around us know that we can do things. From the acknowledgment of others, that we are filling a useful place, however small, in the world about us, comes that sense of status. (Administrators need to know this as well as teachers, in addition to "administrating".)

There must be a central climate around the individual student -- as an integral part of all experiences -- which gives him a sense of security akin to the security found in ideal family living. He or she may be in a school -- living in a small homelike residence with the companionship of carefully selected contemporaries, under the leadership of wise advisors who contribute affectionate interest and bring out moral and spiritual values requisite to a well-balanced existence. The central climate for some students may be a special class in a public school or a sheltered workshop set up by local chapters of the NARC. Here, too, this sense of security may be built in, and up. As the trainees develop skills, they need to enjoy companionship, to share the joy of achievement with those about them, to have the sense of belonging to a group that is theirs.

Learning to have harmonious relationships with others in class or shops can contribute to the development of improved personal relationships with others -- with family, with friends and with outsiders. Such qualitative aspects cannot be diagrammed or put into a formula, but are important to the growth and development of "living" skills.

The art of living is the basis for the activities, the ultimate goal of the mentally retarded individual, as much as, if not more than, it should be for all forms of education. It includes an understanding of the management of one's self and one's resources. The pupil learns that he has these assets, too, and he must be helped to manage his work time, his study time, his hours of play and recreation, his personal physical strenghth or personal talents. The budgeting of allowances, his bank account in the local bank, his income from work, and the nature of money as a medium of exchange are some of the things he "manages" as he moves into a more adult world and a larger community of life.

However limited in scope -- the personal traditions of each student helps to enrich the knowledge and understanding of the others. The geographical locality of his home, his family's activities and accomplishments, his own experiences, all enlarge the sphere of interest as they are shared. As understanding of the world's work is expanded, the outer fringes of the wheel are being touched -- in the study of communication and transportation, public health, utilities, law and government, recreation, culture and occupation.

Within such a framework are found the attitudes, the special skills and understandings of our classroom teachers, our special teachers of art, music, physical education and recreation; the shop teachers, and the teachers who assist in planning personalized instructional materials. Each becomes aware of a student's experiences with the other. Together they observe the budding personalities in the morning assembly of singing or moving to the music of a recent musical; in the joint planning for the days activities; in special excursions -- special to certain individuals; to work on the related functional aspects of reading, writing and number concepts; -- and on through schedules to evening recreational activities of a mixed chorus, a dance or to the weekend scout camp-out; to the preparation and understandings involved as the student goes home for a vacation or takes his parents to his own class to "see what he has done" and to understand clues to potential development.

In this "ideal curriculum," the student in an atmosphere of security is led through purposeful activity into knowledge and understanding of himself and of his environment. He finds for himself a useful place in the world about him.

The interaction, among all concerned in providing the personalized activities to make such growth possible, might be likened unto the Hindu proverb:

"Help thy brother's boat across,
And lo! thine own has reached the shore."

THE RELATION BETWEEN SCHOOL PROGRAM AND VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE RETARDED

by

Edward L. LaCrosse

The availability of jobs in the community is determined by a multiplicity of factors relating to the economy. The schools have little direct responsibility for the creation of job opportunities for their graduates. Their major responsibility lies in preparing the potential worker for the position(s) he will fill. In general education, it is assumed that if the person has mastered the basic skills of communication, and has a fair amount of knowledge that he can master the specific skills needed for employment while he is on the job.

Rehabilitation forces do not swing into effect unless something interferes with the processes of communication or locomotion. Then it is a complex of medical and educational programs designed to get the individual back into the working force.

With the mentally retarded, the condition prevents the individual from reaching a degree of efficiency with the basic skills of communication and the amount of knowledge which will allow him to compete with his normal peers in the work-a-day world. (That is: some of the retarded.) For these youngsters it is important that the habilitation process begin early, last longer, provide a series of guidance processes, and continue after the individual has acquired his first job.

To do this it is necessary that we set aside some misconceptions concerning this portion of our population.

MISCONCEPTION 1 - All Mentally Retarded Persons Need the Services of Vocational Rehabilitation and Special Education.

I know a young man attending a special education program in a secondary school who is enrolled in a work-school program designed to prepare him for the working world. He is a sub-contractor and has four men working for him.

The incidence figure of 3% of the population as mentally retarded is quoted regularly, and school districts are prompted to plan programs on the basis that all of these will need to have special provisions made for them. By far the largest proportion of this group falls into the mildly retarded classification. There are

several individuals in this group who do not need to have the assistance of special class placement if the secondary school program is flexible enough to provide them with meaningful and useful educational activities. We know that many of this group can succeed in adjusted programs and find regular employment at the end of their schooling without special class placement. It has perplexed me how many have failed in their preparation for life (in school) who have succeeded in life. Some of our special education students who have succeeded in preparation for life (in school) are failing in life. There are many possible reasons for this seeming paradox and I think we had better become more fully aware of which of these are most important.

MISCONCEPTION 2 - Test Behavior and Functioning Behavior are Essentially the Same.

In the 1920's a child was tested and found to be moderately retarded and placed under the guardianship plan. During the ensuing years he became "lost" in school and later served with honor in the armed services. After the war he worked successfully for eight years, and was re-tested to clear him from the obvious misplacement under the guardianship program. His test score? An I.Q. of 47.

The experience at the AHRC Sheltered Workshop in New York City over a four-year period has indicated:

> "Factors which did not differentiate success from failure groups, using employment as a criterion, include I.Q., reading level, friendlessness, and adequate knowledge of job culture."

This assumption has led us into stereotyped thinking about programs for the mentally retarded. We are constantly trying to assign a one-to-one prescription of this type of service to that classification of children. For example we try to equate the trainable to sheltered worker and the educable to the work-school programs.

MISCONCEPTION 3 - The Retarded Mature More Slowly; Therefore, We Should Not Start Training Until Later.

The habilitation process should begin as soon as the condition is recognized. Medical amelioration is essential at an early age if the individual is going to develop to his maximum potential. It is also important that preventive disorders not be allowed to develop. This sounds like a meaningless warning, until we look at the physical distortions and listen to the speech problems which should never have been allowed to develop. Fortunately the idea that it is not necessary to provide corrective treatment to the mentally retarded is rapidly disappearing. The rapid growth in the numbers of clinics for the mentally retarded and their emphasis on the young retardate is strong evidence for this change in point of view.

The idea that the mentally retarded are not ready for cadémic work until later, a d ther fore should not be enrolled in school until they are older is being replaced with a recognition of the importance of starting early on the special problems of perception, social deprivation, emotional instability and language development.

MISCONCEPTION 4 - The Special Class is a Regular Class With a Few Special Features to Perform the Special Tasks Dictated by the D'sability.

The retarded individual is deprived of "normal" experiences by h s inability to participate in "normal' activities, and by the lim tations placed upon him by tne disability itself The special c ass becomes a place where his learning deprivation is diagnosed and remedial techniques are b ought into play while rehabilitation is still possible It also is place where experiences are provided which the individual may not have the opportunity to participate in without special p ovisions being made for them It is presentive in this sense

The problems of the retarded child are constantly changing as he grows and the demands of society upon him change. These require that re special class be geared to change and provide the assistance ne essary for meeting the new adj stment problems that he must face at each level. The special teacher must provide developmental guidance at each stage of development, recognizing when a stage has been ma tered and when i is tim to move on to the next stage.

The e arded individual must learn the real ty of the working world No special considerations are going to be made for a job poorly done because he is menta y retarded nor is he going to be allowed a longer time to perform a given task because of his disability. These attitudes towards work are developed from the beginning o his schooling. He should also develop an attitude about the dignity of all work.

MISCONC PTION 5 - The Retarded Learn Less Therefore Do Not Need as Much Schooling.

It is ge eral educational practice today o keep the normal individual in school until he is 17 or 18. We h ve been culminating our programs for the retarded t a much earlier age. The practice of sending the more immature into the working world sooner seems to be a rather obvious error. Some states have recently passed legislation extending the educational program for the retarded to 21 years of age. Most of the programs under this extended legislation are taking the form of work-school programs, which again keep the individual out of the school for a part of the day. This approach

has a great deal of appeal because on the surface it appears to bridge the gap if the procedure outlined earlier was followed. Maybe this giving the responsibility to industry instead of education is more "stop-gap" than "bridge-gap", a cover-up for the lack of good pre-vocational training in the schools. This is not a condemnation of existing programs, but a reflection on the programs which were not provided.

In order for the schools to provide retarded individuals with a good educational program designed to prepare him for the world he will live in it will have to give him good work habits, a good attitude about work, correct any remedial conditions, prepare him socially to face the working world and place him with an employer or placement agency such as the OVR. If the school program was satisfying these rather ambitious goals, there would be no gaps, and a session on bridging the gaps between the schools and employment like we held at last year's convention would be unnecessary.

The situation is not all black, however.

In 1948 only one in ten exceptional children were receiving the benefits of special education provisions designed to meet their special needs. In 1958 it was estimated that one in four were receiving these benefits. The increase in special class enrollments in public school classes for the mentally retarded represented about a 150% increase. In 1948 only .9% of the DVR load were mentally retarded. It is estimated that this year the percentage of teen-age rehabilitation cases will consist of 9% who are mentally retarded. So it is apparent that a great deal has been done in both special education and vocational rehabilitation to effect the vocational adjustment of the mentally retarded.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The discussion is not here in its totality because some of the questions and responses were not clear enough in the recording. We have also taken the liberty to delete some for the sake of brevity.

QUESTION: What is the suggested length of the school day?

SISTER THEODORE: The length of the school day I think in many schools is from 9:30 to 11:30 in the morning, and 1:30 to 3:30 in the afternoon. Recently we tried over a period of months to increase this length of class time, but because we are a residential school and so much of the teaching is done outside of our classroom we found that we could better budget our time by allowing more hours to the group mother who gives much of the teaching in the basic skills that these children need and we again reduced our time for academic class work to a two-hour period in the morning and an hour period in the afternoon. Much of the music, physical education and various extras are outside of the regular class hours.

MISS HULTSCH: We have in the Wilmington Schools two groups of mentally retarded children. Our educable mentally retarded classes are held in the public school. So these youngsters have the same school day that the other children have with the exception of the senior high school students in the work-study program who have school half-time and work half-time. Now about Opportunity School where we have all trainable children in the school, up until this year our school day was from 9:30 in the morning until 2:30 in the afternoon. We found that this day was not long enough.

MISS BAUMGARTNER: I might just describe another situation. We look at our youngsters and education seven days a week from early morning till late at night and of course our house mothers do take care of the youngsters and give the teachers time to themselves. We think of our school day almost from the time the child gets up until he goes to bed seven days a week with time out for some teachers taking turns at recreational activities.

QUESTION: How do you obtain psychological evaluations?

MISS HULTSCH: Our children are all screened before they come to us. They have had complete psychological studies, in some cases psychiatric studies or medical studies. Then the findings of all the specialists are presented to an admissions committee, each child is identified as being a proper candidate for our

programs before he is placed on our waiting list and admitted to our school. Now, who does these initial examinations? Sometimes they are psychologists from the State Board of Health, some are examined by the psychologists for the Wilmington Public Schools, and some cases in private. They all have this examination before they come to us. Our situation is similar to that in most school districts. Our staff of psychologists is limited and we find it rather difficult to get reexaminations of these children. Often many years elapse. I am by profession a clinical psychologist and when I want an examination on youngsters in the school and I can't get it through the school psychologist or private practice, I bring my materials in and do it myself.

QUESTION: How do you evaluate progress?

MISS BAUMGARTNER: We do it every day. Each of our teachers prepares anecdotal records that are turned in at the end of each week indicating what the child has done. From these anecdotal records come many other reports. Reports to the parents or to the Correspondence Department include what the teacher has said in her anecdotal records. Reports go home to the parents, letter-notes go home from one to two times a month. There are yearly reports also in which the teacher summarizes everything she has implicated in a very short form and a yearly report that goes home to the parents. Evaluation, the anecdotal records, are not only used as an on-going report, but form the basis for curriculum development in order to help the child develop all that he has. These anecdotal records are written by the various kinds of teachers teaching on the team and they share with each other what they have said about the child. These findings are merged, and in addition these records are used with our very fine Child-Study Committee in which we have a psychiatrist, a psychologist and a parent counselor. The parent counselor brings to us what he has shared with the parents and what their thinking is. Another way we evaluate is that we allow each child to evaluate what he is doing and we consider this far more important than anything else. Our psychologist gives a complete evaluation after the child has been with us for a period of time. We get all the records from the home community, the psychological and medical evaluation which gives the teacher a chance to view the child.

MISS HULTSCH: Some of our children have not had a psychological examination for four years or more. In some cases I am not too sure that it is necessary. At one time I felt that these tests should be given once a year. I think that in some cases this is necessary but not for all. Of the results that you get from a psychological examination the only thing that is of value is the qualitative analysis of what the child is doing, not the quantitative analysis; the I.Q. and such don't mean a thing. It is the qualitative

analysis of the child's functioning in the different area for which we test the youngsters. I find that the teacher's evaluation of the children daily is very helpful. I would not make a general statement that a child should be tested once a year, once every two years or once every three years. It is determined by this particular child's needs.

QUESTION: When does the training for the specific skills begin?

MR. LaCROSSE: I tried to make the point that the training and the development of the skills which make the difference between a person being able to take advantage of the opportunities that are going to be available for him in the community as an adult, begin at a very young age. The ideas of safety, of cleanliness, the skills and work habits, the ability to get along with others, the ability to take directions and follow directions are developed continually at a sequential level of complexity clear through the school program.

When we move into specific pre-vocational training depends to a great deal on when the individual develops enough of the kinds of skills that will allow him to go on into pre-vocational activities and I would like to see us get away from the kind of triad classification that we have been using because there are other factors. For example, when we put a child into a shop probably the factor which is most important is his development of the concept of safety. Your're not going to put a child into a class where there are band saws if he is so facinated by the whirling blades that he wants to place his finger in it. I've seen children like this placed in shops on the basis of age. They had to be taken out of the shops and given training in safety in a place where the situation was safe enough and this kind of risk and hazard did not exist.

I raised the question about work-school programs because again we are placing individuals in the work-school programs on the basis of an age criteria, sometimes as young as 13 or 14 years of age. I submit that this program may be excellent for most of these individuals but it's too soon. They haven't gained the kinds of skills that would allow them to be successful under the demands made on them in the work situation. Recognize that some of these individuals can do this at 14 or 15, but some of them cannot do it yet at 18. One of the things we haven't done that we have to do is to look at the degrees of skill in the various areas of social, emotional, and adaptive behavior that are necessary for the individual to begin to adjust to the new level of demands that are placed on him.

QUESTION: Is there a detailed curriculum for the retarded?

MISS BAUMGARTNER: Nothing hurts me any more than the detailed curriculum that we developed here in Illinois when I was in the State Department of Education with marvelous teachers here in different parts of Illinois. Oh, they did wonderful jobs! But when I got to see that red covered book out in the mountains of New York and a few other places and people forcing some of these things on those poor children it was most distressing. You look at the child and try to take him where he is and look at his community and his family which is so different from some of the others. Look at these many curriculum guides but get to the place where you can look at his behavior and do something about it.

DR. WEINER: The other day I told someone that I was a pre-world war, not pre-world war I, but pre-world war II trainee and shared an experience which probably few people in the room have. I had my first extended job seven years in an upstate New York ungraded special class. The children enrolled were seven to seventeen and I worked seven years with them. The I.Q. range was supposedly 50 to approximately 75, but it was more like 40 to 80. Now you are not going to be able to do everything you want every day in class so you might just as well realize this. You are going to have to follow a bit of your own methods and to give the parents and children live experience and set up a workable program for you and for the children for the particular day, week, month project and you will do as much of this as you can. An old bit of American folklore "How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood?" And you know the answer as well as I, "If a woodchuck could a woodchuck would chuck wood". Now they tell you that it is very practical, very definite, very specifically a real fact that you have to have some vision of how you are going to spend your daily time; you have to be able to plan not in terms of a vague generality. There should be a record as to when the children come, when they are going to leave, when you have access to the lavatory facilities or whatever. Talking about this first question I think in all of this time I would want you to have a lunch hour. I remember coming home from my first day of teaching and giving an account ofmy day and my mother said, "When do you have a chance to go to the teacher's room?" And I said "We don't". And she said, being the practical little woman, "What's the matter; don't they think teachers do?" Well, I think that you are going to have to simply do what we all have had to do and that is decide how you can best use the five or six hours of the day you have. How can you plan? You won't get preparatory time during the school day, I can guarantee that. In the seven years resulting in seventeen notebooks yea big there was none I could use again the next year.

CHAIRMAN BALDINI: I think that if I had to sum up what our speakers have said today it could all be done with one sentence: Fit the program to the child's needs -- don't try to fit the child to the program.

If you are interested in the mentally retarded and current advances on their behalf in such varied fields as education, parent counseling, vocational rehabilitation, research, federal and state legislation, you should be reading CHILDREN LIMITED.

Published bimonthly, CHILDREN LIMITED will keep you informed of the work of NARC and its member units throughout the country. Significant efforts on the international scene are also reported.

The subscription rate is $1.00 per year prepaid.

Write for the NARC Publications List which offers many pamphlets, leaflets and reprints on Mental Retardation.

Distributed by
The National Association for Retarded Children
420 Lexington Avenue
New York, New York 10017